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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

9 April 1953

SUBJECT: SE-42: CURRENT COMMUNIST TACTICS

PROBLEM

To estimate the significance of current Communist "peace" tactics, and probable Communist courses of action in support of these tactics.

ESTIMATE

1. Since the announcement of the death of Stalin the various "peaceful" gestures and statements by the Soviet and Chinese Communist governments have followed so swiftly upon each other, and the evidence concerning relations among the men in the Kremlin has remained so obscure, that any estimate of the situation is apt to be out of date as soon as it is formulated. This estimate is merely a brief presentation of provisional conclusions on the subject as of the present date.

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2. It is clear that there has been a change in Communist tactics. The number and nature of the recent acts of the Soviet and Chinese Communist governments, the prominence given them by the Communist press and radio, and the high authority of the Communist leaders involved, all demonstrate that for the time being the Communists have adopted a conciliatory approach in their dealings with the West.

3. It is also obvious that developments which may be of profound significance are occurring in the USSR. We are unable as yet to estimate the nature of these developments. It may be that the present Soviet government is united, securely entrenched in power, and has agreed upon a policy radically different from that followed by Stalin. There are indications, however, which suggest that an intense struggle for power may be in progress in the Kremlin. If the latter is the case, current Soviet tactics may proceed from the government's weakness, and may fluctuate as one or another faction in the Kremlin gains temporary dominance.

4. So far, however, the new Soviet tactics in foreign relations have followed a consistent line. They have shown no indication of infirm purpose in the Kremlin. For the time being, therefore, we

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must proceed on the assumption that these acts do in fact represent a consistent new line, and that a "peace offensive" of major proportions is underway. Yet there is no evidence that the ultimate objectives of the Soviet rulers have changed. The threat posed by Soviet armed forces remains as formidable as before. There is no basis for supposing that the menace of Communism to the free world has diminished, or that the fundamental hostility of the Kremlin to the West has abated. There is evidence that Communist tactics have changed; there is no evidence that Communist aims have changed.

5. The changed tactics of the Communists admit of two widely divergent explanations: (1) the Kremlin may hope by a series of gestures, which involve no real concessions, to weaken the political cohesion and military strength of the West, to postpone and confuse the decisions of the new US administration and to gain time for the consolidation of the new regime in the USSR; and (2) on the other hand, the Kremlin may have decided that the harsh tactics of Stalin have ceased to be profitable, and that the time has come to settle many of the important issues outstanding between East and West. By such a change the new Soviet government may hope not only to divide and weaken the West, but also to introduce an era of "peaceful coexistence" with all nations, in the expectation that the power of the Bloc will grow while the capitalist West will decay.

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6. The available evidence is not yet sufficient, in our judgment, to justify either of these divergent explanations. Tentatively, we believe that the Communists are now prepared to make the concessions on the POW issue necessary to reach an armistice in Korea, provided that these concessions can be made in such a manner as to conceal the Communist abandonment of principle. There are ambiguities in the Communist proposals for an armistice, however, and these ambiguities may conceal difficulties which would prevent the conclusion of an armistice. Moreover, we believe that possibly in connection with the armistice negotiation, and almost certainly in connection with the post-armistice negotiations for a Korean political settlement, the Communists will introduce proposals which the US will find it extremely difficult to accept but which the allies of the US will not be disposed to resist, especially in the midst of an era of good feeling engendered by the new Communist tactics.

7. The Soviets may make dramatic proposals for free elections in Germany, for withdrawal of occupation forces, and for reunification of the country. We believe that such proposals, if they are made, will contain conditions which the Kremlin will intend to be unacceptable

to the West, because we do not believe that the Kremlin will give up its control over East Germany. Nevertheless, in the atmosphere induced by a successful armistice negotiation in Korea, any sweeping Communist proposals respecting Germany might have the effect of frustrating for a considerable time the EDC program and the rearmament of Western Germany.

8. Likewise it may be that the Soviets will make proposals for general disarmament, but we do not believe that their proposals, if made, will be possible of acceptance by the West.

9. There are many minor concessions which the Kremlin might make, and many proposals which the West would find it difficult either to accept or to refuse. The aim of such maneuvers would be to impair the political and military strength of the West, and to reap the greatest possible benefits from a decision to end the Korean war. It has long been realized in the West that the West is in many respects more vulnerable to Communist gestures of peace and good will than to Communist violence and threats of war, and it has been difficult to understand why Stalin almost never tried such conciliatory tactics. Our present view is that the Kremlin is now adopting such tactics, and undertaking to create an atmosphere in which resistance to Communism and to Soviet imperialism will be at least temporarily weakened.